EXPLORING THE FINAL FRONTIER

A Presentation

By Robert Monroe

The Association for the Study of Dreams

International Dream Conference III

June 23-29, 1986

ABSTRACT

Robert Monroe is unique in his approach to the role he plays in the contemporary cultural scene. A glimpse into his background helps in the perception. He understands well the patterns of academe from his familial childhood as the son of a university professor. His mother, a medical doctor, provided his easy association with those in related careers. Upon graduation from college, he entered radio broadcasting where he achieved national recognition at twenty-three for his writing, production and direction of network radio programs. By the mid-fifties, he had his own production company in the industry, was vice president of a radio network, and a significant composer of underscore music.

At this point, having passed the million word mark in writing, he stopped until, as he put it, "there was something important enough to justify the effort." He then moved into radio station and cable television ownership, and began his research and investigation into human consciousness which led him into his present field of endeavor. Among his literary achievements are two books, the first, JOURNEYS OUT OF THE BODY, still in publication after fifteen years and published worldwide in six languages, and FAR JOURNEYS, first printed in late 1985, both issued by DOUBLEDAY.

First and most importantly, Mr. Monroe makes no claims as a scientist or medical practitioner in the accepted meaning of such labels. Also, he is not a religionist. He consistently repudiates any attempts to place him or his work in any related category.

Mr. Monroe does see himself as a synthesizer of ideas, concepts, processes, and interpretations uninhibited by the limitations of conventional disciplines, yet drawing from these such inter-active parts as to create a different result or prospect. He thus believes that the wheel may be reinvented many times out of ignorance, but in such flow, something of original value may emerge. He enjoys being identified as a toolmaker, and teacher if necessary in the application of such tools to enhance human consciousness.

In his talk, Mr. Monroe describes the very specific reasons why his interest shifted gradually away from his successful broadcasting and television activities into areas completely foreign to his knowledge and experience. He relates his early adventures from a close personal viewpoint, and likes to ask the questions of the pragmatic left-brainer: what action would you take if faced with an identical problem, one that had no answers within the scientific and cultural context which you valued so deeply? Whatever the sugestion, usually he can respond: I <u>did</u> that.

With only a few options remaining, he picked the most likely and workable from his perspective. Thus he tells of the early activities of a research and development program quietly and covertly instigated by his own broadcasting company to study seeming unexplored aspects of consciousness. At that time, over twenty-five years ago, he soon discovered that very little acceptable data was available. If you were awake, you were conscious. If you were asleep or unaware for any other reason,

you were UN-conscious. It was light and dark, black and white, no gray area. Anything less or different was labeled as drunkeness, dreaming, hallucination, or barring these, some form of psychosis which demanded immediate treatment and/or hospitalization. Thus all aberrations should be left in the hands of authoritative professionals to be squeezed into a rigid mold. If it did not fit, make it. However, this was not the prime reason for Mr. Monroe's surreptitious attitude. He was then President of two broadcasting corporations that did include additional stockholders, whom he felt sure would take a dim view of such unproductive and near-irrational effort. Therefore, only the company in which he was sole stockholder funded such research; his business associates remained ignorant of his avocation and retained their image of him as a solid reliable albeit creative chief executive.

During his talk, Mr. Monroe goes into the early days of his research, how he quite naturally was the initial prime subject in the laboratory behind his country home in Westchester County, New York; the early discovery of the effects of various sound patterns upon human consciousness which later became defined as a Frequency Following Response (FFR) and one of his basic tools. With his wide experience in sound, it was understandable that he should follow this route. The prime area of exploration was focused upon the borderland state between wakefulness and sleep - consciousness - unconsciousness. Any use of medication seemed contraindicated as too difficult to control in quick changes from one state to the other. FFR sound came into being as a result of the need to balance on the thin line between the two. Later, in 1975, Mr. Monroe would be granted a patent on the process. He found the FFR sound patterns produced

a consistent and similar response among subjects other than himself, and that consciousness could be extended far beyond the usual boundaries that commonly identify the sleep state. This was achieved through the careful application of sleep-producing sounds, simulating the theta delta ranges by the use of amplitude rather than direct frequency. If normal bio-monitoring indicated a typical sleep pattern and the subject did not respond easily to soft vocal interrogation, it became a simple matter to restore consciousnes by the application of FFR sounds in appropriate waking Beta ranges, still holding the borderland sleep state.

Much was learned during this period as to the alteration of what we normally think of as waking consciousness. As physical awareness lessened, other forms of perception began to emerge. A psychologist associate at the time described it as "conscious dreaming." The subject began often to see, eyes open or closed in a darkened booth, brilliant colors in various moving patterns. He would "hear" sound, voices, music which were not a part of the signal he was receiving through headphones. As he learned to move more deeply into sleep, pictures both moving and still, appeared in his mental vision, nearly all of them traceable to memories of physical activity during the previous 24 hour period. Even during occasional lapses into sleep, which were then controlled, the subject believed that he was awake and conscious throughout the experiment. When he did sleep momentarily, he had no memory of the drop-out. To him, there was no gap in his consciousness. A question just before the onset of sleep would be answered instantly several minutes later, when he was "recalled" via the FFR signal.

Mr. Monroe tells briefly of the decade of the "sixties", when he moved to Virginia, and the gradual reestablishment of a research facility there. It was during this decade that he worked intensely at a

personal level to understand and develop control of his "wild talent", the out of body state (OBE). It wasn't until 1972 that he finally put his research program into full operation again in a facility west of Charlottesville, Virginia. A key group was formed with relative ease to participate in testing and experimentation. Among the volunteer members were several electronic engineers, a physicist, two medical practitioners, two psychologists, several executives plus various subjects from typical social and economic levels. Again, funding was provided by Mr. Monroe's private firm.

The first major development came early in the period, when the FFR sound process was modified to produce a binaural "beat", or phased sound approach to obtain effective frequency levels common to those found in the electrical brain wave activity. In place of amplitude modulation, differential signals between each ear were used, thus enabling the brain to "hear" a third signal of the desired useful frequency. For example, by inserting a 100 hertz signal in one ear and a 106 hertz signal in the other, the differential signal of 6 hertz was generated between the headphones, i.e., within the head of the listener-subject. The use of binarual beats was not original with the Monroe group, but this application of the FFR sound concept was indeed a new prospect. It brought increases in response as high as 150% over any previous methods and techniques. Moreover, when properly utilized, coherent electrical patterns of the signal were replicated in both brain hemispheres, narrow banded and as much as 50% greater in amplitude than previous experiments.

In his talk, Mr. Monroe reports the profound changes that took place in their research effort as a result of the audio hemispheric synchronization as a means to alter consciousness in a controlled manner.

He cites the development of specific states of consciousness that offered access to other levels of personality, ideal for use in psychoanalysis, for control of body signals such as pain, for accelerated learning, and from his personal viewpoint, a direct pathway to willful and controlled out-of-body states. Thus 80% of his test subject group became familiar and proficient in working in the phenomenology of OBE's. Mr. Monroe details much of the experiences of the group during his presentation.

Mr. Monroe also discloses the most recent work in the Institute laboratory which has brough forth a unique means to indicate and measure various forms of consciousness. It is a system of metering body DC voltage whereby with changes in perception, such voltage reaches a null point, and a shift in polarity occurs. With such shift, a noticeable change in consciousness is reported by the subject. Further, the greater the body voltage in such reversed polarity, the broader the possibilities this different state of consciousness appears to offer. Coupled with the Hemi-Sync methods and techniques and other non-invasive methods now available, a prospect of exploration of human ability appears unlimited.

It is this prospect which Mr. Monroe addresses as the main theme of his talk. As an individual uncommitted to any specific discipline with its incumbent rigidity of acceptability, he proposes that a new overview be struck as to the nature and potentials of human consciousness. He believes this indeed is the ultimate or final frontier that man must explore, for therein may lie the treasure trove of knowledge and understanding that provide ready answers to enigma that have haunted and pre-occupied man for thousands of years. He holds that within con-

temporary Western civilization, there exists the means to conduct such exploration on a scale never before contemplated by man.

It must be a unified effort, with no avenue of information or experience discarded simply because it cannot fit a known category or measured by inapplicable standards. Conversely, all present scientific theory and practice must be included, yet bearing in mind that virtually all such methods and concepts are matter-related and therefore at best may be inaccurate. Analyze smoke and the fire is understood. Radiation from a distant star brings information to a remarkable degree when processed through appropriate instruments. The best we can say relative to human consciousness in terms of measurement is that we are only able to measure its effect upon matter and behavior patterns relative thereto. At present, the only possible tool available to measure and understand human consciousness is another consciousness, human or otherwise. Perhaps our dog knows and understands us better than any human, for he is not nearly so filled with bias, prejudice, emotional sets, preconceptions and other factors that are inescapably incorporated into the human observer-experimenter.

How, then - where to begin? First and foremost, the project must be released from the protocols and sacred cows that may act as a restraint to a no-holds barred investigation. Whatever is uncovered must be considered in terms of a cumulative consensus. Nothing is to be rejected simply because it may be for the moment an anomaly or inconsistency.

Most significant, the tool itself must be cleansed and honed. Its abilities must be improved and enhanced by every means available. Much will be learned by this process alone - and one improved human consciousness may well have the propensity to deliver the key that unlocks the door.

Ten may open it wide. One hundred may change Man's destiny. Super-human consciousness. Available some year at your favorite dispensory.

Then, unknowns easily become knowns: dreams, sleep, birth, time-space-matter, growth, drives, motivations, personality, character, love, physical death, God?

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Nancy McMoneagle
The Monroe Institute
Faber, Virginia 22938